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Platform and Constitution

— OF THE —

SOCIALISTIC LABOR PARTY,

ADOPTED AT THE

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National Executive Committee of the Socialistic Labor Party
172 First Avenue.

1886.

PLATFORM

of the Socialistic Labor Party of North America.

Labor being the self-evident creator of all wealth and civilization, it is but equitable that those who perform all labor and thus create all wealth should enjoy the product of their toil.

But this is rendered impossible by the modern system of production, which, since the discovery of steam-power and since the general introduction of machines, is in all branches of industry carried with such gigantic means and appliances as but a few are able to possess.

The present industrial system is coöperative in *one respect only*, which is: That not, as in former times, the individual works alone and for his own account, but dozens, hundreds and thousands of men work together in shops, in mines, on huge farms and lands, coöperating according to the most efficient division of labor, while the fruits of this coöperative labor are not reaped by the workers themselves, but are in a great measure appropriated by the owners of the means of production.

This system, by gradually extinguishing the middle class of people, necessarily separates society into two classes: The class of the wage-workers, and that of the great bosses.

It brings forth as its natural outgrowths:

The planlessness and reckless rate of production.

The waste of human and natural forces.

The commercial and industrial crisis.

The constant uncertainty of the material existence of the wage-workers.

The misery of the laboring masses.

The accumulation of wealth in the hands of a few.

These conditions which under the present industrial system cannot but become more and more aggravated, are inconsistent with the interests of mankind, and with the principles of justice and true democracy, as they destroy those rights which the Declaration of Independence of the United States hold to be inalienable in all men; the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

These conditions shorten and imperil life by want and misery. They destroy liberty because the economical subjection of the wage-workers to the owners of the means of production leads immediately to their political dependence upon the same sources, and finally frustrate the pursuit of happiness, which is never possible when life and personal liberty are constantly endangered.

In order therefore to abolish these humiliating conditions, we strive to introduce the *perfect* system of coöperative production—that is, we demand that the workers obtain the undivided product of their toil.

This being only feasible by securing to the workers control of the means of production,

We demand:

That the land, the instruments of production (machines, factories, etc.,) and all the products of labor become the common property of the whole people; and,

That all production be organized coöperatively, and be carried on under the direction of the commonwealth; as also the coöperative distribution of the products in accordance with the service rendered, and with the just needs of the individuals.

And to realize our demands, we strive by all proper means to gain control of the political power.

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The Socialistic Labor Party claims the title, "Labor Party," because it recognizes the existence of an oppressed class of wage-workers as its fundamental truth, and the emancipation of this oppressed laboring class as its foremost object.

DEMANDS

For the Immediate Amelioration of the Condition of the Working People.

The Socialistic Labor Party strives for a radical revision of the Constitution and Statutes of the United States, the States and Municipalities, according to the following demands:

a. SOCIAL DEMANDS.

1. The United States shall obtain possession of the railroads, canals, telegraphs, telephones, and all other means of public transportation.
2. The municipalities to obtain possession of the local railroads, of ferries, and to supply the light to streets and public places.
3. Public lands to be declared inalienable. They shall be leased according to fixed principles. Revocation of all grants of lands by the United States to corporations or individuals, the conditions of which have not been complied with or which are otherwise illegal.
4. The United States to have the exclusive right to issue money.
5. Congressional legislation providing for the scientific management of forests and waterways, and prohibiting the waste of the natural resources of the country.
6. The United States to have the right of expropriation of running patents, new inventions to be free to all, but inventors to be remunerated by national rewards.
7. Legal provision that the rent of dwellings shall not exceed a certain percentage of the value of the buildings as taxed by the municipality.
8. Inauguration of public works in times of economical depression.
9. Progressive income tax and tax on inheritances; but smaller incomes to be exempt.
10. Compulsory school education of all children under fourteen years of age, instruction in all educational institutions to be gratuitous, and to be made accessible to all by public assistance (furnishing meals, clothes, books, etc.) All instruction to be under the direction of the United States and to be organized on a uniform plan.
11. Repeal of all pauper, tramp, conspiracy and temperance laws. Unabridged right of combination.
12. Official statistics concerning the condition of labor. Prohibition of the employment of children in the school age, and the employment of female labor in occupations detrimental to health or morality. Prohibition of the convict labor contract system.
13. All wages to be paid in cash money. Equalization by law of women's wages with those of men where equal service is performed.
14. Laws for the protection of life and limbs of working people, and an efficient employer's liability law.
15. Legal incorporation of trades unions.

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16. Reduction of the hours of labor in proportion to the progress of production; establishment by Act of Congress of a legal work-day of not more than eight hours for all industrial workers, and corresponding provisions for all agricultural laborers.

b. POLITICAL DEMANDS.

1. Abolition of the Presidency, Vice Presidency and Senate of the United States. An Executive Board to be established, whose members are to be elected, and may at any time be recalled by the House of Representatives as the only legislative body. The States and Municipalities to adopt corresponding amendments of their constitution and statutes.
2. Municipal self-government.
3. Direct vote and secret ballots in all elections. Universal and equal right of suffrage without regard to color, creed, or sex. Election days to be legal holidays. The principle of minority representation to be introduced.
4. The people to have the right to propose laws (initiative) and to vote upon all laws of importance (Referendum.)
5. The members of all legislative bodies to be responsible to and subject to recall by the constituency.
6. Uniform law throughout the United States. Administration of justice to be free of charge. Abolition of capital punishment.
7. Separation of all public affairs from religion; church property to be subject to taxation.
8. Uniform national marriage laws. Divorce to be granted upon mutual consent, and upon providing for the care of the children.

RESOLUTION.

WHEREAS, the Socialistic Labor Party of the United States is so far chiefly a propagandistic party;

WHEREAS, it is a good means of agitation to participate in municipal, county, State and congress election; therefore,

Resolved, that the Socialistic Labor Party utilizes this means, and leaves it to the option of the different sections to participate in the elections or not, but it urgently recommends to enter into political action only when there is really a prospect of success or at least an opportunity for agitation.

Sections participating in any election shall under no circumstances enter into any combination with any other party as against the Labor Party; all other parties are to be considered reactionary.

CONSTITUTION

— OF THE —

SOCIALISTIC LABOR PARTY.

I. MANAGEMENT.

The affairs of the Party are conducted by the National Executive Committee, the National Board of Supervision, the local Sections, the National Conventions, and by the general vote.

II. CONVENTIONS.

THE NATIONAL CONVENTION.

1. National Conventions of the Party shall take place according to the needs of the times. The National Executive Committee is obliged to have a general vote taken every year before April 15th, in order to ascertain whether and where a National Convention is to take place; a general vote shall also be taken if three Sections in three different States shall demand it. Ten Sections in five different States may call a National Convention. Every Section belonging to the Party for three months prior to the National Convention, and which has fulfilled all its obligations, is entitled to representation therein by one delegate for each 100 members or fraction thereof. Each delegate shall have only one vote. Proxy delegates must receive their credentials from the Sections they represent.

2. The National Convention frames the National Platform, decides the form of organization, elects the place where the next National Executive Committee and Board of Supervision will be located, and investigates and decides all difficulties within the Party.

3. The expense of the delegates will be borne by the Sections sending them. The business expenses of the National Convention will be paid by the Party.

III. NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

1. The National Executive Committee consists of nine members, to be elected by the Section of the place where the Committee is located. From among its members the Committee elects a Corresponding Secretary for home and one for foreign affairs, also a Financial Secretary, a Recording Secretary, a Treasurer and two Auditors.

2. Vacancies in the Executive Committee will be held with members elected by the Section as above stated. The National Executive Committee shall declare vacant the seat of any of its members for absence from three consecutive meetings without sufficient excuse, and is authorized to order the Section of its locality to fill the vacancy.

3. The term of office of the National Executive Committee extends from one Convention to the next Convention.

4. The National Executive has for its duty:

- a. To carry out the resolutions of the National Convention and those adopted by general vote, and force their observance by all officers and members of the Party.
- b. To make proper arrangements whereby the Sections of the various districts may act unitedly for systematic propaganda.
- c. To conduct and manage the agitation throughout the country.
- d. To represent the Party internally and publicly.
- e. To establish proper relations and communication with the Socialistic Parties of other countries.
- f. To make all necessary preparations for the National Convention, and make a full report to the same on all Party matters.
- g. To issue semi-annually a report to the Party, stating definitely the condition of every Section and of the Party's finances. This report shall be revised by a Committee of three, elected by the local Section.

5. The National Executive Committee has the right:

- a. In cases of urgent necessity to make suitable propositions which shall become binding if endorsed by a general vote of the Party within two months after issue of the call.
- b. To representation in the National Convention by one of its members, who shall have no vote, but a mere advisory voice in the proceedings, and shall bear no other credentials.
- c. The National Executive Committee decides its own order of business.
- d. The Executive Committee may compensate its officers, according to the labors performed by them, from the treasury of the Party.

IV. BOARD OF SUPERVISION.

1. The Board of Supervision shall be composed of nine members.

2. The duties of this Board shall be:

- a. To watch over the actions of the National Executive Committee.
- b. To settle all difficulties in the Party, involving questions of principle, within four weeks after receiving the necessary evidence, the decisions to be at once communicated to the National Executive Committee; and to decide in cases of expulsion on appeal.
- c. The Board of Supervision can, when necessary, suspend any Boards, Executive Committees, Party officers or members. From all decisions of the Board of Supervision appeal may be taken to the general vote. The Board must submit to the members any appeal two weeks after appeal was placed into its hands, and the Sections must report the result of their vote to the Board of Supervision within four weeks; within two additional weeks the Board of Supervision must publish the result.
- d. The Board of Supervision may send one of its members as a delegate to the National Convention, under the same conditions as the delegate of the National Executive Committee. (See III., 5, d)
- e. The Secretary of the Board of Supervision shall render a full report of the transactions of that Board during its term, to the National Convention.
- f. The Board shall declare vacant the seat of any of its members for absence from three consecutive meetings without sufficient excuse, and is authorized to order the Section of its locality to fill the vacancy by election.

V. SECTIONS.

- a. A number of persons may form a Section, providing they acknowledge the Platform and Constitution and resolutions of the Party and belong to no other political party.
- b. They shall demand admission to the Party by sending a list of members and dues for the current month to the National Executive Committee.
- c. Each Section shall send each month a report of its numerical and financial condition, also its progress and prospects, to the National Executive Committee.
2. Only one Section of one nationality shall be established in each city or town. Branches shall be formed by the Section wherever necessary. These branches shall be designated numerically in the order of their organization, in the town or city. These branches shall be permitted to transact business of a local character, but all matters of a general nature shall be settled by the Central Committee, in which all branches shall be proportionately represented.
3. Sections shall have jurisdiction over their own members.
4. All Ward and District organizations, including all branches in suburbs, shall belong to the Section.
5. No Branch or District organization shall conduct business of an important local character, independently of the Section.
6. Should a protest be entered against the admission to a Ward or District organization, or to a Section, of any person making application, a two-thirds vote of all present in the regular business meeting will be necessary to admit him.
7. A majority of two-thirds of votes in the business meeting shall be sufficient to expel any member.
8. Each Section or Branch shall hold an agitation meeting at least once every two weeks, and a regular business meeting at least once a month.
9. Three-fourths of the members of a Section must be wage-workers. This restriction shall not, however, apply to agriculturists (farmers).
10. The names of all persons applying for admission to the Party must be voted upon in a regular business meeting of the Section or Branch.

CENTRAL COMMITTEE.

1. In every city where two or more Branches exist, all local business of the Section and dealings with the Party authorities will be carried on by a Central Committee.
2. The Central Committee will be composed of delegates elected by the Branches, the basis of representation determined by the Branches collectively.
3. The Central Committee shall have power to assess the local membership in a sum not exceeding two and one-half cents per member per month for funds necessary for local purposes. This assessment to be deducted from the regular dues.
4. The Treasurer of each Branch will report monthly to the Central Committee in writing, concerning the financial standing of his Branch, and will pay to the Financial Secretary of the Section the dues of each member five (5) cents to the National Executive Committee, and also all dues and assessments belonging to the local Central Committee. All other money of the Branch shall be held

by its Treasurer, subject to the order of the Branch which will be self-supporting, and conduct its own affairs, subject to the general regulations of the Sections.

5. Every delegate to the Central Committee will be subject to recall at any time by the Branch which he represents.
6. All transactions of the Central Committee shall be subject to the approval of the Branches, and will be promptly reported to them. If not objected to, they will be considered approved; but upon call of any Branch, a general vote of all local Branches shall be taken for the purpose of ratifying or rejecting any disputed action of the Central Committee.
7. The Section officers shall report to and receive their instructions from the Central Committee, which represents the Section. They shall attend all meetings of the Central Committee and perform the duties specified in the Constitution. They are full members of the Central Committee.
8. The Central Committee has full power to fill vacancies in Section offices during the regular term, until a new election of officers takes place.
9. The Central Committee shall elect from its midst an Investigating Committee of three, who shall investigate and decide upon all difficulties within the Section, subject to the approval of the Central Committee or the Section.
10. The Central Committee will meet as often as necessary, and the sessions shall be open to all party members who may desire to witness the proceedings.
11. Upon dissolution of any Branch, all of its property shall be delivered to the Section officers.
12. The Section shall assemble semi-annually, in January and July, for the purpose of electing the officers. In extraordinary cases the Branches may be called upon to assemble in joint meeting as the Section.
13. The Organizer shall have the right to appeal to the whole Section in case of conflict with the Central Committee, but must execute their orders until countermanded by a general vote of the Section.

DUES.

1. The Sections levy upon each of their members a monthly tax of five cents, to be paid monthly to the National Executive Committee. For local purposes the Sections may levy an additional tax according to their needs.
2. The dues shall be receipted for by stamps, which shall be furnished by the National Executive Committee to the Sections, and shall be given only as receipts for monthly dues by the Sections to their members.
3. Every member shall be provided with a copy of the Constitution free of charge.

SECTION REGULATIONS.

1. Every Section elects from among its members an Organizer and such additional officers as it deems proper. The Organizer shall conduct the correspondence with the Executive, and he shall send an official report once every month to the National Executive Committee; he shall send five cents of the monthly dues of each member to the Executive; he conducts the local organization.
2. All Section officers will be elected for the term of six months.
3. At every meeting a new Chairman shall be elected who shall observe the usual parliamentary rules of order.
4. Members who have withheld payment of their dues for more than three months shall be suspended from all rights until restored to good standing.

5. Sick or unemployed members will be excused from payment of dues.
6. The result of every election within the Section must be communicated at once to the National Executive Committee.
7. Upon dissolution of any Section, all its property shall be turned over to the National Executive Committee.

DISTRICT ORGANIZATION.

1. All Sections located within suitable neighborhood shall form a District organization.
2. It shall be the duty of the District organization to carry on the work of agitation and organization within its province in a systematic manner (through a committee appointed for this purpose), and to endeavor to form new Sections at such places where no Sections of the Party exist.
3. Each District organization shall hold a conference at least once every six months. Each District organization shall regularly report to the Executive Committee about the progress of its work and its prospects.

GENERAL REGULATIONS.

1. Amendments to or alterations of this Constitution can be made by the National Conventions or by a general Party vote. A general Party vote may be called for either by the National Executive Committee, National Board of Supervision or three Sections; and any proposition in the interest of the Party made by either of the aforesaid shall be laid before the Party for a general vote by the National Executive Committee. During the first four weeks after the call for a general vote, each or either of the aforesaid parties, boards or constituencies has the right to propose amendments to any propositions made in the proper way aforesaid. Such amendment or amendments to be accompanied with the proposition to be voted upon by the Party. The result to be communicated to the National Executive Committee within eight weeks from the original call for vote.
2. No person shall be eligible as a candidate of this Party for any public office who has not been at least one year a member of the Party in good standing, and has identified himself with the movement by active participation. This rule may be suspended in cases of necessity by the Board of Supervision and National Executive Committee on application of any Section.
3. All committees and officers in the Party shall be elected by a majority vote.
4. All officers, boards or committees in the Party shall be subject to dismissal by a general vote of their constituents. Any member expelled shall have the right to appeal to the Board of Supervision.
5. All members shall be eligible to any office or position in the Party.
6. All members acknowledging the Platform and Constitution take upon themselves the obligation to assist each other to the extent of their ability in case of need.
7. The National Executive Committee is directed (in order to bring about a uniform system of transacting business) to have proper financial books made to be furnished to the Sections at cost price.
8. The National Executive Committee shall immediately after the expulsion of any member publish the name of the expelled in the Party organ; and in its semi-annual reports give a list of the names so published.
9. All former provisions conflicting with these resolutions are rescinded.
10. This Constitution and all resolutions herewith adopted shall take effect on January 1, 1886.

Socialistic Labor Party of N. A.

National Executive Committee,
New York City.

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